

**COGNITIVE AND EMOTIONAL FRAMES
OF UNIVERSITY-BRAND VIDEOS ON SOCIAL MEDIA:
*COLLEGE MILLENNIAL PERCEPTIONS***

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Cognitive and Emotional Frames of University-Brand Videos on Social Media: *College Millennial Perceptions*

Introduction

Student enrollment across the country is on a steady decline. As many institutions of higher education increasingly face challenges of student recruitment and retention (Bulger, Braga, DiGiacinto, & Jones, 2016), the need for responsive measures and alternative sources of funding are becoming even more of a pressing priority. “Alumni are the most important resources to the universities as they provide financial contributions...and can share experiences with younger alumni” (Chen & Yeh, 2014, p. 113). In a recent study about campus giving behaviors, Freeland, Spenner, and McCalmon (2015) noted that alumni donations are the single largest source of voluntary support for higher learning and that young alumni (described as students who have graduated within the past ten years) should not be overlooked. The authors suggest that in order for universities to expand their business development model and donor base, they should learn to understand the motivations behind young alumni giving (Freeland, Spenner, & McCalmon, 2015). Research has shown that strong alumni networks along with “perceived quality and prestige” (Newman, 2011, p. 163) of a university are also positively related to alumni giving, with life members contributing cumulative donations greater than \$10,000. Many alumni associations are turning to social media to grow their social networks and to establish or maintain alumni connections with low-cost-efficiency in real time (Chen & Yeh, 2014).

Social network sites (SNS) such as Facebook and YouTube also allow these non-profit organizations to build loyalty and branding reputation, to reach large audiences (including current students and young alumni), while helping people “remember personally meaningful experiences” through visual images and videos (Bayer, 2016, p. 3). Examples of attractive donor

prospects include alumni who: 1) recall positive undergraduate experiences, 2) are more emotionally attached and loyal to the university, 3) have knowledge about other alumni and donors, and 4) are willing to recommend the university to others (Newman, 2011). Thus, it is logical for universities to establish a strong branding reputation with prospective and current students; and new graduates through social media in a visual, emotionally appealing way. While previous studies have examined the relationships between alumni characteristics and alumni giving, there is a lack of data regarding the use of social media videos in the context of university and alumni-related messages, and what types of content are more appealing to millennials. Building upon the theoretical foundations of the *Elaboration Likelihood Model*, this thesis aims to explore the use of cognitive and emotional framing of organizational social media videos – in the context of the University of Hawaii (UH). Particularly, through qualitative focus group interview method, this research seeks to understand what type of promotional messages are more favorably received by college millennials and how certain media frames may play a role in the way they perceive UH today and beyond graduation.

Literature Review

Nonprofit Organization's Social Media Use

Nonprofit organizations (NPO) in health, social justice, religious and educational settings are consistently challenged with minimal resources, staff and funding. Many NPOs are tasked with promoting their causes, increasing their visibility and raising funds with severely limited public relations budgets and have turned to new media, which are defined as “digital media that allow interactivity and independent distribution of information,” (Seo, Kim, & Yang, 2009, p. 123) to assist in their efforts. Examples of new media include websites, blogs, podcasts, and wikis. However, these forms of communication have mainly been one-sided from the

organizational standpoint. Modern communication channels such as social media now afford two-way interactions, with SNS allowing many-to-many forms of communication exchange that reach wider audiences with better engagement (Hogan & Quan-Haase, 2010).

Particularly, social and mobile media offer ways for people to “organize, document, and remember personally meaningful experiences from the past” (Bayer, 2016, p. 3) while increasing the potential audience size and enabling users to view images and videos at their convenience. Social media is highly interactive, allowing users to create and share their own content while receiving immediate feedback from many people (Liu, Fraustino, & Jin, 2016). As such, users are disclosing more and more about themselves “.... through a variety of social media affordances, and with greater frequency” (Halperin & Dror, 2016, p. 178). Now with the growing interest of NPOs trying to reach more of the *millennial* generations, it is imperative they get on the bandwagon of harnessing the power of social media. In their alumni social media interaction study, Chen and Yeh (2014) suggested that SNS and interactive media devices may bring new opportunities for universities to connect with alumni. A recent study following a group of Louisiana 4-H agents showed how the faith-based organization used social media methods such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube to capture the attention of young audiences for promotional and educational purposes (Zammit, 2016). The findings showed that 100% of its members used social media as the preferred choice of communication and the constant and consistent use of social media to communicate with their members helped build better relationships between the organization and its publics (Zammit, 2016). Particularly, posting video and pictures was among the most popular methods among the group as a way for them to learn more about the organization, while strengthening their sense of belonging (Zammit, 2016).

In a similar way, universities and institutions of higher education are also boosting social

media presence to improve campus relations by providing more online educational possibilities, assisting in admissions and enrollment, offering library services, and even counseling students after tragedies (Freeland, Spenner, & McCalmon, 2015). A recent study on organizational community-building online showed that the public responds positively to messages that promote interactivity, community-building, and mobilized calls to action (Saxton & Waters, 2014). Communicating useful and meaningful messages helps establish a sense of trust between an organization and its constituents, which is paramount to building strong organizational relationships (Hon & Grunig, 1999).

Social media plays a prominent role in building that trust by providing a forum for continual interaction and open dialogue. For instance, NPOs use SNS such as YouTube to inform, educate and communicate to viewers about their organization's mission, vision and services (Waters & Jones, 2011). Universities also use YouTube as a teaching tool to provide online lectures to students "anywhere, anytime" (Kellner & Kim, 2010, p. 8). Providing educational content online helps people feel that the organization really cares about them and wants to genuinely foster and nurture their relationship. Being perceived as useful is important for organizations to establish or maintain legitimacy in the eyes of their stakeholders (Spence, Sellnow-Richmond, Sellnow, & Lachland, 2016). Spence et al. (2016) assert that achieving such credibility in the public's eyes helps boost an organization's reputation. Through the use of SNS, universities are able to persuade audiences and shape how they are perceived in the public eye. Thus, social videos not only help organizations build trust and a better brand image; but they also give audiences more opportunities to view and provide feedback, thereby increasing "reputational yield" (Waters & Jones, 2011). YouTube is also renowned for reflecting a "growing visual culture that portrays human experiences" (Bekkers & Moody, 2014) in various

ways to stimulate emotions and persuade viewers, often leading to increased online interaction. In a recent qualitative study of organizational identity in the context of social media, Dawson (2015) surmised that authentic storytelling and communal relationships were essential elements of successful branding online (Dawson, 2015). Given the fact that social media affords the opportunity for content providers to observe real-time relationships between organizational actions and public reactions, researchers suggest that media professionals should adapt their methods to this new reality (Saxton & Waters, 2014). Despite numerous studies on organizational use of social media, however, there is still a gap in research surrounding specific techniques for NPOs to engage with millennials in a more meaningful and impactful way.

Visual Storytelling

Most people love a good story – especially if they feel personally connected and have an emotional tie (Mileski, Schneider, & Bruegge, 2015). In the context of online marketing, Mileski et al. (2015) contend that if there is an interesting plot with memorable characters and powerful images, the narrative is even more likely to be favorably received and remembered. Once the audience feels emotionally attached to the story, it is also more likely their cognitive process will lead them to purchase the product associated with the message. Visual storytelling, which includes images and video, has long been a desirable method for content designers to increase branding awareness of organizations, services and even visitor destinations. In the context of promoting Singapore and New Zealand as a hotspot for tourists, studies have concluded that a successful branding campaign includes the following five characteristics: credible, compelling, differentiating, emotional and overarching (Pan, Tsai, & Lee, 2011).

Other studies also suggest visual storytelling as a powerful way of presenting a product to potential users and to help viewers “... identify themselves with the product by the story and

provoke their curiosity to investigate the product in depth” (Mileski, Schneider, & Bruegge, 2015, p. 6). In a content analysis of nonprofit organizations’ YouTube videos, Waters and Jones (2011) found that the three Vs of communication – verbal, vocal and visual – are often used together to impact audiences on multiple communication fronts, while keeping them riveted on the main message. Their study has shown that words, vocal tone of the narrator, and the imagery all work in concert with each other to facilitate better retention in the viewers’ minds. In the context of anti-smoking TV ads, personal testimonials that involve graphic and emotionally evocative visuals were the most effective in motivating Taiwanese smokers to quit the habit (Huang, Friedman, Lin, & Thrasher, 2016). Suspenseful, intense images in anti-smoking TV ads also have been shown to evoke strong emotional responses and promote additional message processing among young adults (Niederdeppe, 2005). In the context of online shopping, Hsieh, Hsieh, and Tang (2012) contend that multimedia messages that involve different degrees of richness (such as video, music, text and animation) tend to have more favorable message-processing effects than communication involving single-layer text or image elements. Proitz (2017) also shows that “everyday, 4 billion images are shared online, with 3.5 billion photos and videos being liked on a daily basis” (p. 2). Proitz (2017) contends that younger generations prefer visual images over text-based communication. In the context of viral marketing campaigns, visual narratives using comedic humor to evoke joyful emotions produced positive messaging effects, increased online sharing and a reported a notable spike in web traffic (Hsieh, Hsieh, & Tang, 2012).

When the body of a 3-year-old Syrian refugee boy washed up on the shores of a beach in Turkey on September 2, 2015, a journalist’s photograph of Alan Kurdi quickly spread online as the iconic image of the refugee crisis and was tweeted 30,000 times within 12 hours, reaching 20

million people worldwide (Proitz, 2017). It was “a visual statement beyond words” (Proitz, 2017, pp. 8-10) that spurred mass online activism and a slew of donations and volunteer offers from young people to nonprofits and other organizations assisting the refugees. Similar to the online protests of the 2011 Arab Spring uprisings and the Occupy Central movement, the Alan Kurdi posting apparently went viral because of the powerful imagery that evoked powerful emotions.

Exemplification Theory

The emergence of this visual culture does not depend only on technology. It is rooted in a tendency to “picture and visualize human experiences in an essential way” (Bekkers & Moody, 2014, p. 144). Thus, “exemplars that are concrete, iconic, and emotionally arousing are more likely to influence perceptions than abstract, symbolic, and emotionally inconsequential exemplars and base-rate information” (Westerman Spence, & Lin, 2015, p. 93). Such conclusions can be supported by the *exemplification theory*, which suggests that simple, iconic, visually striking, and emotionally arousing images may be especially effective in persuading members of the public, because “they may be more easily stored in memory and retrieved for later reference” (Spence et al., 2015, p. 341). Spence et al. (2015) described an example when the American ground beef industry was unfairly portrayed as “pink slime” on national network news in 2012. During that public relations crisis, exemplar images affected consumer attitudes in such a negative way that the beef industry suffered major layoffs and revenue losses as well as a severely tarnished public image. Exemplars in that scenario had a negative impact on the beef organization because of the unforgettable images engrained in the public’s minds. The public relations fiasco demonstrated how “images play an important role in emotion, engagement, and persuasion” (Rebich-Hespanha & Rice, 2016, p. 2). In a recent study of health-related media messages, Westerman et al. (2015) used the exemplification theory as a way to explain why

people make judgments as a result of emotional and “attentionally favored exemplars.” Their study found that visual exemplars about an issue often have a strong impact on viewer’s perceptions and behaviors surrounding that issue.

Visuals have a way of reaching audiences without the use of words. Photographs, maps, charts, and drawings also help frame complex issues into manageable forms that may usefully evoke emotional responses through imagery (Rebich-Hespanha & Rice, 2016). Although pictures are believed to paint a thousand words, they can often be more impactful when combined with other message features. NPOs tasked with strategic communication are also often challenged with finding the right combination of pictures, text, sound and other design elements. While dominant visual frames can quickly elicit existing attitudes, emotions, and cognitions relevant to the NPO’s issues and image, it is highly suggested that media designers who work with NPO messaging should select specific visual iconic elements that can then be developed into more complete narratives (Rebich-Hespanha & Rice, 2016). That’s when the magic of digital storytelling takes place. For instance, exemplars that identify with people in a positively emotional way can be very impactful for organizations building brand identity. In the context of promoting a bed and breakfast company Airbnb, the use of vivid imagery (combined with emotional storytelling techniques) helped viewers feel as if they were going through the travel experiences themselves, thus boosting online sales for the company (Pera & Viglia, 2016).

Within the social media realm, storytelling enables rational, emotional, and relationship experiences that engage and move people to action (Pera & Viglia, 2016). The implications demonstrate the need for NPOs to focus the power of stories through visual, social media platforms. Messages that provide conceptual and visual metaphors have shown to be an effective strategic message design tactic in the context of mental health videos. Research has also

indicated that “. . . authenticity leads to a broad range of positive well-being consequences” (Gan & Chen, 2017, p. 466). Authenticity in this sense is defined as a way of “being” and a genuine “reflection of selfhood that captures one’s true identity” (Counted, 2016, p. 269). Videos that contain testimonials by real people telling authentic stories of their own experiences have shown to be very effective in creating favorable attitudes and positive behavioral changes among audiences in the Entertainment Education genre (Desens & Hughes, 2013). Desens, et al (2013) believe such persuasive messages can be explained through an extended version of a communication theory known as the *Elaboration Likelihood Model*.

Elaboration Likelihood Model

The *Elaboration Likelihood Model* (ELM) is a theoretical communications framework that focuses on target audiences and explains why viewers are affected by certain messages through *central or peripheral route processing* (Dillard, 2010, p. 207). The ELM theory asserts that those who are both motivated and able to process a persuasive message are in an attentive frame of mind and can elaborate on the message in order to form an attitude about the message topic. Receivers experience central route processing when they have a high motivation to process a message and also take the time to carefully evaluate the pros and cons of an issue before forming a cognitive decision about the way they *think* about the message delivered. If a viewer processes a TV message in this way, attitude and behavior change is highly possible and more enduring (Gray, 2009). Peripheral route processing, on the other hand, occurs when receivers have a low motivation to process the message, are distracted, don’t particularly care about the issue or don’t take time to think about the message. Viewers who receive a message in this way are usually persuaded by simple, peripheral cues, such as the way the message makes them *feel*. In other words, viewers are swayed through emotional, rather than cognitive appeals. In

summary, the ELM holds the notion that audiences can be divided into two groups: 1) those with high motivation and ability to process; and 2) those with low motivation and ability to process. Those in Group 1 tend to centrally process messages and are more likely to have longer lasting attitude changes; whereas those in Group 2 tend to peripherally process messages and are more likely to experience more temporary attitude changes. As such, understanding the different impacts of cognitive and emotional framing as well as audience motivation is key in crafting persuasive online video messages to enhance the image of an organization (Saxton & Waters, 2014) such as a university, and/or its alumni association. A further development of the ELM theory known as the Extended Elaboration Likelihood Model, or EELM, also advances the notion that identification with characters and strong engagement with compelling story narratives may actually motivate a deeper intensity of attention that is mainly emotional rather than cognitive (Slater & Rounder, 2002). Slater and Rounder (2002), in their study relating to entertainment education, asserted that the EELM not only focuses on the needs and goals of the audience, but perhaps more so on the creation of a compelling narrative and development of characters that may best relate to their audiences. EELM suggests that character identification and absorption in the story line are elements strong enough to overpower and even preclude the tendency of recipients to cognitively form counter arguments. Thus, message designers of strategic communications are often drawn to the richness of both the ELM and EELM frameworks.

Visual Cues & Media Frames

In keeping with the theme of audience-focused approaches, media framing is a technique used by producers to speak to various audiences. Relying on the assumptions of the ELM theory, media framing can be divided in two dominant categories of cognitive or emotional. Dominant

cognitive frames are meant to enhance the viewer's central thought processing of persuasive messages; while video messages that strive to appeal to audience feelings about a particular issue, spur peripheral route processing via emotional frames (Xu, 2015, p. 590). For instance, exciting images in a car ad can spur emotions about the sexiness of adventurous driving in a new vehicle — thereby enhancing emotional appeal especially for viewers who have a low motivation to purchase a new car. As such, these types of audiences tend to process such messages peripherally, thus making simple decisions based on emotional cues. To the opposite extent, viewers who are highly motivated and in the market for a new car, will tend to respond more favorably to cognitively-framed messages that provide useful information about the economic fuel system, safety specifications and physical spaciousness of a prospective purchase. These types of messages are meant to enhance cognitive appeal by engaging viewers in central thought processing. As such, highly-motivated viewers tend to focus on the quality of the message and persuasive arguments before making a conscious decision to buy. (Septianto & Pratiwi, 2016, p. 171).

Cognitive Frames

Using cognitive frames in message deliveries helps enhance the viewer's thought processing of persuasive messages (Xu, 2015, p. 590). The intent for public relations practitioners is to somehow convince the publics of the NPO's effectiveness in order to change the opinions, attitudes or behaviors about a particular subject. For example, cognitive framing has been used in broadcast news stories that express words and images to lend a point of view, focus, or angle to a piece of information" (Igartua, Moral-Toranzo, & Fernandez, 2011, p. 174). Igartua et al (2011) surmised that journalists often use cognitive framing to help viewers understand complex topics (such as immigration) and steer them toward a direction of *thinking* in

a particular way about an issue. Some videos use statistical information, text-based messages and scientific evidence to help patients think about certain health issues (Gray, 2009, p. 261); while others in higher education use visual demonstrations to increase cognitive processing and memory retention such as in cases of surgical instruction (Borgersen et al, 2016). Studies have also shown that basic motivation to process a message is strongly associated with cognitive learning (Marini & Boruchovitch, 2014).

Emotional Frames

Video messages that strive to appeal to audience feelings about a particular issue, on the other hand, use emotional frames. Many communications studies suggest that in general, emotional framing is more effective in increasing message processing, comprehension and persuasion — even though people are less motivated about the subject matter (Niederdeppe, 2005; Hsieh, Hsieh, & Tang, 2012; Proitz, 2017). Such messages can contain emotional topics, displays of emotion, and other types of emotional information (Bolls, Lang, & Potter, 2001). For example, studies have shown that anti-tobacco ads that promoted emotional responses increased message processing among youth audiences, thus increasing their intentions to stop smoking (Niederdeppe, 2005). Rebich-Hespanha and Rice (2016), in their climate change communication, found that iconic and visual frames such as the stranded polar bear, the caving glacier and graphic images depicting rising global temperatures have shown to arouse strong emotional responses, leading to more effective message reception and processing. In the context of environmentally conscious videos, other research has shown that college millennials who experienced strong emotional responses also reported strong behavioral intentions to be more environmentally responsible (Perrin, 2011). Informational health videos promoting sun protection found that emotionally charged narratives (such as a woman sharing her story about

developing skin cancer from using tanning beds) had longer lasting effects on viewers than those that were cognitively charged with just scientific facts and statistics. (Gray, 2009) And finally, in the context of viral marketing campaigns, research has shown that visual narratives using comedic humor to evoke joyful emotions produced positive messaging effects, increased online sharing and a reported a notable spike in web traffic (Hsieh, Hsieh, & Tang, 2012).

Hsieh et al. (2012) concluded in their viral marketing studies that emotionally driven videos are likely to encourage viewers to share their emotions with others. Online messages that evoke intense emotions (such as awe, anger, anxiousness and surprise were shown to be positively correlated with the number of times they are shared (Alhabash, Baek, Cunningham, & Hagerstrom, 2015). Many often do so on SNS such as YouTube, which is a popular site for universities to connect with students and alumni.

Organizational-Relationship Outcomes

The field of public relations is helpful to restore and maintain a sense of community both on and offline (Valentini, Kruckeberg, & Starck, 2012). Early authors of organizational public relations theory have suggested that long-range communal relationships provide mutual benefits for both the organization and its publics, thereby increasing chances for building trust, commitment and satisfaction (Hon & Grunig, 1999). In particular, the practice of strategic organizational communication involves conscious efforts to understand and engage audiences in ways that align with the mission and vision of the organization (Desens & Hughes, 2013). As such, social media is an effective tool for NPOs to provide information, build community, provoke dialogue, promote their mission and call people to action (Saxton & Waters, 2014). Connecting with audiences online is an important part of NPO public relations efforts. But recent studies show that millennials are “merely tolerating organizations on Facebook and are not

engaged publics” (Saxton & Waters, 2014, p. 283).

Advocates of the community-building theory have described the concept as “both a process and an outcome of the integration of people and the organizations they create into a functional collectivity that strives toward common or compatible goals ... including the organization’s acts of social responsibility” (Valentini, Kruckeberg, & Starck, 2012, pp. 874-875). Just as the Arab Springs movements of 2011 demonstrated the public’s creation of online communities, it is necessary for NPOs to understand the need for publics to cultivate their own relationships with organizations based on what they perceive are relevant for their own purposes. Building relationships with latent or non-publics over social media may seem impossible, but the affordances do exist for an organization to connect with more active audiences.

NPOs can achieve significant levels of interaction and engagement with stakeholders “if strategic choices are made to demonstrate honest, open communication that builds trust” (Hon & Grunig, 1999, p. 21), commitment and satisfaction. Hon & Grunig (1999) report that such communal relationships exist when both parties provide mutual benefits, regardless of receiving something back in return. Saxton et al (2014) found in their studies that Twitter and YouTube are the two most often used social media platforms in strategic communication campaigns because of the convenience and ability to monitor the number of fan likes, comments, and shares. YouTube, in particular, is by far one of the major hubs for sharing viral videos, reaching more than a billion users and continues to grow (Jiang et al., 2014). Researchers believe non-profit organizations looking to expand their network should consider having a dedicated YouTube or other video-sharing site as part of their overall external communication strategy (Spence et al., 2016). Research has also found that publics prefer dialogue over information and that community-building messages that promote interactivity are perceived more favorably and

attract significantly more likes and comments than informational messages. Publics have also shown increased engagement when responding to call-to-action messages—those with a clear goal of soliciting the public’s help in lobbying, advocacy, or volunteering efforts (Spence et al., 2016).

In the context of video games, the concept of “civil religion” and the devotional-promotional model provides a framework for message designers to help cultivate a relationship with audiences that will strengthen ongoing communications and public relations (Spaulding, 2016). Devotional-promotional model refers to the idea that game developers create games that consumers love. Fans of the game essentially become devotees, while the designers are likened to the clergy. Once the covenantal relationship is established, there is a sense of trust that the clergy will fulfill the devotee’s needs. As devotions increase, the devotees evangelize and spread word of their “civil religion” which then increases followers and the movement. Although a strange concept to incorporate in NPO public relations, the idea is a valid one in that it addresses the need for two-way communication processes and a community-building aspect that is intended to foster and nurture future stronger relationships.

Case of the University of Hawaii

According to the University of Hawaii’s main website, UH is a unique and diverse place of learning that offers areas of excellence in the following areas: international advantage, location, opportunity and economic development (University of Hawaii, 2017). Its alumni base boasts a worldwide network of more than 290-thousand alumni from all 50 states and more than 125 countries (University of Hawaii Alumni Association, 2017). However, a brief Google search online using keywords “University of Hawaii reputation” pulls up a negative review at the top of the list from a former lecturer at the UH Manoa campus: “UH is a most boring and wasteful

place for MOST serious students and professors overall, it is a terrible academic institution (Students Review, 2003). A brief preliminary search conducted by this researcher of the University of Hawaii Foundation's YouTube channel, on the other hand, shows numerous positively-framed messages in the form of video public-service announcements (PSAs) that use cognitive frames to include university facts about research, scholarship offerings and fundraising goals. The PSA entitled "*Thanks a Billion*," (University of Hawaii Foundation, 2016) uses graphic text and statistical information to appeal to audience's thoughts about the effectiveness of UH Foundation's fundraising efforts and use of those monies in a socially responsible way. By using the cognitive frame, the long-term goal is most likely to gain audience support for future capital campaign efforts. As of May 1, 2017, the PSA has garnered only 35 views, which implies that social media engagement and share levels of this particular campaign appear to have been weak and ineffective. It is suggested that perhaps NPOs consider incorporating emotional framing in their online messages.

The official UH website offers a wide range of communication messages aiming to evoke emotional responses from audiences. For example, the "*Your POV*" PSA (University of Hawaii at Manoa, 2016) takes the perspective of a millennial student's point of view and compiles a variety of emotionally charged images to create a spot that helps viewers *feel* and experience UH, rather than *think* about UH. The use of music, smiling faces of students and visually stimulating beauty shots of millennials experiencing Hawaii were used to appeal to the way potential students feel about UH. Based on the nearly 4000 views, this video is clearly more engaging and more shareable than the "*Thanks a Billion*" campaign. By considering various visual storytelling styles on social media, NPOs can create a more viable public image and better social relationship with their target audiences – especially with the millennials who are visual and social by nature.

This thesis aims to determine the effectiveness of certain dominant visual frames by examining UH college student levels of opinion, attitudes and behaviors toward the UH brand in terms of: 1) their perception of UH as a trustworthy and reputable institution for academic advancement, 2) their desire to persist at the university through graduation and eventually earn a UH degree and 3) their feeling of connectedness to UH, as well as their desire to stay connected with UH as alumni after graduation. The hope is to further advance research in NPO strategic communications through visual storytelling and social media as well as enhance university alumni relations for UH and other higher education institutions around the world. The following research questions were proposed.

Research Questions

The main purpose of this thesis study is to explore the different ways UH millennial students process cognitive or emotionally-framed UH-brand video PSAs on social media and how different types of visual framing play a role in shaping college students' perceptions about their university. Particularly, this researcher sought to achieve a better understanding of what types of video elements or styles are more appealing among college millennials and which UH-brand videos are more persuasive in promoting student recruitment, retention and future alumni connections. Based on extensive literature review, it is natural to hypothesize that emotional videos would be more effective and appealing than cognitive videos. However, it is of extreme interest for this researcher to witness firsthand the emotional and thought processes of college millennials as observed in real-time; and to hear what they have to say, as well as how they feel and why. Thus, the following research questions were proposed:

RQ1: What types of UH-brand video messages are more favorably received by college millennials?

RQ2: How do the cognitive and emotional frames of UH-brand social videos play a role in the way college millennials shape their (a) perceptions about UH, (b) desires to complete their degrees at UH, and (c) behavioral intentions to stay connected with UH after graduation?

Method

Focus Group Interviews

To answer the research questions above, the qualitative method of focus group interviews (FGIs) was conducted based on the researcher's need to deeper explore the way millennials process social video messages and how the video presentations play a role in shaping perceptions about their university (Babbie, 2007). FGI is a phenomenological study that is also useful for researchers to harness a better understanding of college millennial perspectives and observe their reactions as they view and process UH video messages in a social context. Thus, this method allowed for more qualitative in-depth, cognitive probing of young students' attitudes, views and opinions about different video message frames, while garnering a richer understanding of their intentions to complete their degree and stay connected with UH after graduation (Ballantyne, Wibeck, & Neset, 2016). Two separate focus group sessions of 90 minute durations were each conducted in the UH Mānoa Media Lab, where a total of 12 participants were able to view and critique UH-brand promotional videos on a large video wall monitor. During each FGI session, participants critiqued a total of nine (9) 30-second videos public service announcements (PSAs), three in each of the categories of: 1) cognitive; 2) emotional; and 3) mixed (a combination of both cognitive and emotional framing). Videos were played one at a time with discussion immediately following each PSA.

Participants

Participants were selected on the basis of relevance to the study topic. Through purposive sampling, this researcher chose to recruit students from the younger demographic of the

millennial generation of early to mid-20s. All respondents were reported to be currently-enrolled UH students of the millennial generation, which is defined by marketing researchers as adults born between the years of 1981-1997, or ages 20-36 (Fry, 2016). The sampling, which was mainly recruited from undergraduate students from the UH Mānoa flagship campus (for purposes of convenience and the likelihood of providing a critical eye to the subject) consisted of 5 males and 7 females. They all reported coming from diverse cultural and academic backgrounds. Five students were local residents: 2 from Hawai‘i island; 3 from O‘ahu. Five were from the continental United States: 3 from the West Coast and 2 from the East Coast; one from American Samoa, and one international student from Korea. Eight reported majoring in the field of Communications, while the rest ranged from Marine Biology to Ethnic Studies, Political Science and Social Work. All were in their third or fourth year of college.

Moreover, to explore the richness of the ELM theory (which calls for students to be motivated and able to process a message), it was important for this researcher to establish a general baseline of participant motivations for higher learning. We asked students to complete a brief questionnaire based on intrinsic learning motivation statements adopted from previous studies (i.e., Boruchovitch, 2008; Costa-Lobo, Silva, Ribeiro, & Silva 2017; Marini & Boruchovitch, 2014). Boruchovitch’s (2008) factor analysis study suggested two different types of motivation—intrinsic (i.e., self-motivation) and extrinsic (i.e., external pressure from family). For purposes of this study, we measured the level of intrinsic motivation by asking students to respond to the following 14 statements, based on a 5-point Likert scale (1: strongly disagree and 5: strongly agree).

- 1) I study because studying is important to me
- 2) I want to study and learn new subjects
- 3) I study because studying gives me pleasure and joy
- 4) I keep trying to solve a task, even when it is difficult for me

- 5) I do my academic work because I think it important
 - 6) I study because I like to acquire new knowledge
 - 7) I like to study difficult subjects
 - 8) I try to know more about the subjects I like, even without my teachers asking
 - 9) I like going to college because I learn interesting subjects there
 - 10) I get interested when my teachers start new content
 - 11) I study because I want to learn more and more
 - 12) I study even without anyone requesting
 - 13) I like to study challenging subjects
 - 14) I put a lot of effort into college work, even when it will not count
- (Boruchovitch, 2008). (To view the questionnaire, see Appendix F.)

Overall, participants reported having high intrinsic motivations for higher learning. The simple average score from the written responses measured 3.95 out of 5. This information would later prove to be useful during the analytical phase, which assumed respondents were both motivated and able to process persuasive messages in the context of higher education.

Selection of videos

Through content analysis of the University of Hawaii's YouTube channel, (University of Hawaii-YouTube) a manual search of 30-second commercials by the researcher of this current study returned results of thirty-one PSAs dating back to 2010 (11 for UH Mānoa, 10 for UH West O'ahu; 1 for UH Hilo, and 9 for UH Community Colleges). A similar search was also conducted on the University of Hawaii Foundation's YouTube channel, which displayed a video collection of twenty-three 30-second PSAs, also dating back to 2010 (UH Foundation). The general messaging of the UH system videos included information on different campus programs; campus life and student experiences; while the UH Foundation videos focused more on successful alumni stories as well as scholarships and fundraising achievements.

YouTube links to all 54 videos were compiled into one list (see Appendix A) and emailed to two fellow colleagues in the field of communication. Both coders were chosen because of their experience and expertise as media production professionals, who have worked in local,

national and international broadcast settings for more than 20 years. They were each asked to rate the cognitive and emotional levels for each video and rank their levels of favorability. A link to an online Qualtrics survey was attached to the email, asking coders to review each of the 54 videos and respond to the three sets of questions after watching each video. To rate the videos, coders were asked to view all the 54 videos individually and respond to a set of questions gleaned from previous marketing studies (i.e., Hsieh et al., 2012; Pera & Viglia, 2016). For instance, to measure the level of cognitive framing, we asked coders to respond to the following five questions using a 5-point Likert scale (1: strongly disagree and 5: strongly agree):

- 1) This video makes me think about the message being delivered.
- 2) This video provides a lot of facts and figures.
- 3) This video uses a lot of words and/or text information.
- 4) This video is trying to capture and keep my attention.
- 5) This video is trying to tell me something important. (Bolls, Lang, & Potter, 2001; Niederdeppe, 2005; Xu, 2015)

(For descriptions of videos selected in the cognitive category, see Appendix B). To measure the level of emotional framing, coders responded to the following five questions based on a 5-point Likert scale (1: strongly disagree and 5: strongly agree):

- 1) This video is pleasant.
- 2) This video uses vivid imagery.
- 3) This video is trying to make me empathize with the characters.
- 4) This video is trying to offer me a vicarious experience.
- 5) This video is trying to evoke some sort of emotion from me (Hsieh, Hsieh, & Tang, 2012; Pera & Viglia, 2016)

(For descriptions of videos selected in the emotional category, see Appendix C.)

After answering these two sets of questions, they were asked to rate the overall favorability of each video according a scale of 1-10, with 10 being the most favorable and 1 being the least favorable. Favorability in this context was measured according to the following criteria: 1) quality of production consistent with professional guidelines; 2) airable TV quality in accordance

with broadcast industry standards; and 3) appropriate suitability for focus group study in the context of strategic communication and branding of university-related videos.

To ensure reliability, this researcher also reviewed and responded to the survey for all 54 videos. A random selection of three videos was first chosen to see if the two coders and the researcher of this study were somewhat consistent in their understanding of cognitive and emotional frames. Once it was determined that all three coders returned consistently similar responses in the randomly-chosen videos, the final process of selection was determined by the scores of the two coders. Using an Excel spreadsheet, this researcher calculated the simple average scores of both coders. Videos that received the highest marks for each category were placed in cognitive and emotional groups accordingly. Then based on the favorability rating, the top three in each category were selected for the focus group sessions. Those that showed proportionately high marks in both cognitive and emotional framing were placed in the mixed category, and then selected by the highest level of favorability. (For examples of selected videos in the mixed category, see Appendix D.)

Data Analysis

Each of the two 90-minute focus group interviews were audio-recorded in its entirety using a digital device and transcribed into 47 pages. This researcher also jotted 10 additional pages of field notes in a separate journal regarding observations of participants' reactions, facial expressions and responses to the video PSAs. All comments and opinions were recorded anonymously. During discussions, the moderator asked pre-structured open-ended questions, which were poised as follows:

- 1) What is your overall perception about this video and why?
- 2) What elements of this video stood out for you the most and why?
- 3) How likely are you to share this type of video on social media? (Why or why not?)

Trust, commitment, and satisfaction are among the top qualities of successful nonprofit organizations and reputable institutions for higher learning—and possible predictors for future alumni engagement (Flora & Maibach, 1990; Hon & Grunig, 1999; Gray, Vitak, Easton, & Ellison, 2013; Priest & Donley, 2014). Thus, in order to assess favorable public relations outcomes as a result of these video PSAs, the focus group agenda ended with the following line of questioning:

After viewing all these videos,

- 1) What are your perceptions about UH as a trusted institution for higher education?
- 2) What is your level of commitment to completing your degree at UH?
- 3) What is your level of desire to remain connected with UH after graduation?

To analyze and interpret the data, a systematic method known as *framework analysis* was used, as suggested through previous qualitative focus group studies conducted in the field of health and nutrition (Rabiee, 2004). Rabiee (2004) recommends following the five key stages of analysis which include: 1) familiarization, 2) theme identification, 3) indexing, 4) charting, and 5) mapping and interpretation. The first stage consisted of listening to the audio recordings several times in totality, and then in segments broken up by video categories. Transcribing the interviews into a Word document was a long, tedious and arduous process, but proved useful in being able to process and absorb the extensive data. After thoroughly reading and comprehending comments made in the transcripts as well as the handwritten observation notes, key memorable quotes were highlighted and copied to a separate Word document for visualization of any emerging patterns. Once overarching themes began to surface, this researcher used colored post-it notes to categorize each concept or topic. Then, an Excel spreadsheet was created to separate and index the comments and feedback according to each video in each category. A chart was developed using various color-coded text to map and differentiate responses between each focus group and research question. After sifting through all

the data, this researcher used a computer-based approach to lift relevant quotes from the transcripts, then cut and paste them into a separate word document that grouped comments by big ideas, consistency, frequency and intensity of opinions. Once everything was visibly mapped, the raw data became much more manageable to see the bigger picture and interpret the raw data in an organized, systematic fashion which produced the following findings.

Results

To answer the first research question about what types of UH-brand video messages are more favorably received by college millennials, the results showed students were largely in favor of emotionally-framed videos. Based on the collected responses, respondents especially appreciated those that featured vibrant, colorful images, authentic voices of current students and faces of their own millennial generation. Findings also showed participants were partial to compelling storytelling narratives featuring identifiable characters.

Overall Favorability

After conducting a thorough and systematic framework analysis of the qualitative data, it was overwhelmingly clear that videos with emotionally-dominant frames gained overall favorability among college millennials in both focus groups. Out of the nine PSAs, all three videos in the emotional category garnered unanimously positive nonverbal reactions and verbal comments, while only one video in each of the cognitive and mixed categories received somewhat favorable consensus.

Emotional Videos

Students expressed feelings of happiness, hope and inspiration after each preview of the emotional videos. Such verbal opinions were strengthened by this researcher's observations of students' nonverbal signs during the playing of the videos, which

included smiling, crying, head-nodding and/or foot and hand-tapping. Such feel-good emotions also seemed to spur favorable comments about their perceptions of the university's reputation as a legitimate research institution and a culturally diverse environment that embraces family values.

For instance, the first emotional video entitled: "*Scholarships 2016*" started off with a vibrant shot of a caterpillar crawling in the open hand of a student, then continued to show various clips of interesting programs offered on campus, and a successive sequence of smiling faces, presumably belonging to scholarship recipients. Immediately following the video preview, the moderator asked students to describe their feelings in one word. They responded:

Student 1: *Happy.*

Student 2: *Hopeful.*

Student 3: *Awesome.*

Student 4: *Feel-good.*

And when the moderator asked students to elaborate on the reasons why they felt such emotions, they mentioned common interest in: 1) identifiable characters that seemed authentically happy; 2) students of their age group accomplishing their goals of graduation; 3) visual images symbolizing positive transformation; 4) campus pride and program offerings.

Student 1: *I said happy because the smiles looked natural, they didn't look fake . . . I remember that they said you can make a difference and then they had the shots of people graduating.*

Student 2: *I said hopeful because . . . it kind of sends the message that no matter what you're into, you can succeed over here . . .*

Student 3: *I said awesome because I didn't know that many kind of jobs or things I can do in the university ...*

Student 4: *I said feel good because the music was just kind of like optimistic music and they're showing everything that you can do and they just had that scene where they spoke to everyone just smiling, kind of laughing.*

Student 5: *The overall message was really good, it makes me have a lot of pride in my campus, seeing all those students who are doing really cool things and stuff I wish I could do-- like that caterpillar shot looked really awesome!*

Student 6: *This school is legit.*

It was clear students favored this video based on visual cues that triggered “feel-good” emotions, such as the initial exemplar of the caterpillar (a symbol of growth and transformation), followed by the colorful clips of the beautiful tropical campus, coupled with authentic-looking shots of real college millennial students learning, while having fun. Students also reacted to multi-media and audio cues, which featured uplifting music throughout the piece, while superimposed text graphics identified numerous types of programs offered.

In similar fashion, the second emotionally-framed video offered more of the same type of messaging, but received even stronger positive reactions. The “*Come Join Us*” PSA was an energetic, fast-paced advertisement promoting UH West Oahu with colorful images, upbeat music and numerous millennial-aged students engaged in various activities. At the end of the video, the narrator, which resembled the voice of a millennial student, gave a call to action, while verbal and visual text graphics displayed the fact that the commercial was produced by students from the Academy for Creative Media.

During the period of time the video was playing on the monitor, this researcher visually observed students’ widening eyes, raising eyebrows, smiling faces, nodding heads and tapping fingers and feet. Participants clearly showed visible signs of positive emotional reactions. Especially upon hearing the last line, students immediately nodded in approval and some even applauded, uttering the words:

Student 1: *Wow.*

Student 2: *Yeah!*

Student 3: *Pretty good!*

Student 4: *A recruiting video!*

Student 5: *Definitely a recruiting video!*

Students say they were pleased with the choice of upbeat and happy local-flavor music, as well as the direct call to action message, but most especially that it was a spot for students, by students.

Student 1: *The video – it moves with the music and so the cuts were moving with the beat. And the cuts were actually cutting into things that were similar to the thing right before, so it flows better! And it was more like showing the campus.*

Student 2: *Yeah, the message was a little more direct, you could tell they were trying to show everything you can do ‘cause even at the end they said, ‘oh this video was made by our creative media students’ so they’re like showing we have media programs you can join and sports you can play or whatever.*

Student 3: *Yeah, I like that there were a lot of students in it too. And made by the students.*

Student 4: *I liked that one too ‘cause it was made by students. I don’t know why that sticks with me, but I would much rather listen to them.*

When the moderator asked them why it was important to see other students in the videos, they mentioned vicarious feelings of accomplishment and a sense of pride for fellow students being able to produce such professional videos.

Student 1: *It just makes it relatable to the audience you’re trying to recruit.*

Student 2: *For me, I felt proud of those students who made the commercial, because they did a great job. Shows they can get together and have a good time and make a little ad like this. That’s pretty cool.*

Student 3: *Definitely. If I was not in university already and I saw that, and I was interested in media like I am now, I would be like, ‘oh, I could make one of those commercials one day and I would be excited about that!’*

Student 4: *I think it's helpful too that it was more approachable to have students say 'Come join us!' We're all having a great time here on West O'ahu versus if like administration or a professor was saying 'oh you could study this.' I would be just like 'OK,' I wouldn't take it to heart as much as people my age telling me that we could have a good time over there.*

When asked whether they would be willing to share this video on social media, the respondents unanimously answered in the affirmative, saying they would be more inclined to share videos that showed off their own campus and fellow student successes.

Student 1: *I would probably add a message if I was attending that campus. So, say if we made one for this campus, I would say 'look at what my school of communications did.' Because I share UH videos all the time so family back home can see 'oh this is what it's like in Hawaii...this is what it's like to study there!'*

Student 2: *I would probably put, 'we're dope and we do dope things!'*

The second focus group also shared a similar sentiment about the same “Come Join Us” video, displaying positive physical reactions and facial expressions—but with even more insightful comments that indicated a tinge of *campus envy*. Only the international student commented about the sequence shots going by too quickly, saying he was confused about where the message was heading (until he saw the ending, with the campus logo and call to action). Overall, however, the reception from the group was highly positive.

All: *WOW!*

Student 1: *Right?! I like that one better. It was happier. I liked the ending where it showed that it was put together by students. That was very nice.*

Student 2: *Why doesn't UH Manoa look like that? The infrastructure looked so nice and new. I mean I know that was a commercial but even in a commercial here, it's hard to make the campus infrastructure look nice.*

Student 3: The buildings here look physically old and even if the inside is renewed, you still want a nicer vibe like a more modern, like to follow the trend. But that looks like it was just built like maybe in the past five years so it looks really updated and the technology is really up to date.

Student 4: I liked how it seemed kind of inviting.

While students were clearly envious of their west side sister campus, they also commended their student counterparts for producing such a well-produced commercial that evoked genuine, happy, feel-good emotions.

Student 1: I think it was mostly just music and I think the music was very geared toward a younger audience, which made it really nice and happy.

Student 2: I've never seen someone so happy picking out a book from the library.

Student 3: She's smiling so much. It seemed like they were genuinely happy because it said at the end 'made by students,' so they are having a fun time going to school, but they're also having fun working on things, making projects for the school and that seemed genuine to me.

Student 4: I liked that last shot at the end like when the guy's holding the camera filming it, remember when they said made by students in the creative media, that's appealing to communications and journalism students 'cause you know you have opportunities like what they did.

Student 5: I think it was definitely more appealing as a student to see other students having an enjoyable time with their studies and just at the campus in general.

Once again, the theme of positive character identification and favorable engagement in the visual narrative was clearly articulated.

The third favorable video in the emotional category was from the UH community colleges collection entitled “UHCC Because.” The PSA was a visually-inspiring message full of interactive images of families, first-generation college graduates and culturally-conscious students achieving their dreams and goals through higher education. First-person voiceovers of

authentic testimonials seemed to tug strongly at the students' hearts as several appeared to be wiping tears from their faces when asked about their first impressions immediately following the viewing of the video.

Student 1: *I'm about to cry! It was a really good one!*

Student 2: *Emotional!*

Student 3: *I think it was really impactful.*

Student 4: *Relatable.*

Student 5: *Yeah...just very emotional, slow-moving*

Student 6: *Yeah, definitely hits you right in the feels!*

Students were extremely responsive to the various identifiable characters sharing their seemingly authentic stories of success.

Student 1: *I identified with the one that said I want to be the first college graduate of my family, but another part that really spoke to me in this video was I liked how they did have older people in it, because that's a big thing now, going back to college like after being in the army and stuff. So I liked how there's a lot of older students in the video with families...*

Moderator: *What part did you think...oooh that really got me?*

Student 2: *At the beginning when the girl said 'finding a job that she wanted,' 'cause that's kind of -- I feel like for me and kind of a lot of people-- that's what college is about, you don't really know what you want in your job all the time and a lot of people switch majors and stuff, but just finding a job that you want and that you can do...*

Student 3: *For me, the family thing...that made me feel.... 'cause some people after marriage--they kind of gave up school only because of the children, but that shows that 'oh you can do school and the parenting at the same time...'*

Student 4: *Kind of makes you feel capable of doing what you set your mind to do...because there saying you can multi-task, you can be a mother and go to school. I think that's important especially in the local community 'cause I have a lot of friends who are young mothers and they kind of give up just to work two jobs. They don't think about school as much.*

Student 5: *I don't have a family, but that's a pretty important part of my projected future. So that beginning, 'making a better life for my family,' that's very impactful for me.*

Student 6: *I thought it was nice 'cause it covered a lot of different types of reasons why everybody is here, trying to learn—like there's a lot of possibilities. We're all trying to find jobs that we want, we all want to graduate, we're being the first in our family to graduate. So it just made it seem we're all in this together, like we'll figure it out here at school and with everyone that's going through the same thing.*

The second group also had strong emotional tear-jerking reactions, along with additional comments regarding stereotypes, cultural roots and diversity. Participants also agreed this PSA was a great spot to help recruit new students to the community college system.

Student 1: *It was sweet.*

Student 2: *Yeah it was really nice. I think it was good for non-traditional students. You know, definitely older students, 'cause that's the vibe I got, marketing for older students.*

Student 3: *I think it also helps 'cause there's a stereotype towards community colleges. It helps kind of take that stigma away and makes it look like it's just as legit as the Manoa campus or West Oahu.*

Student 4: *I kind of like how it was a slower-paced commercial, so you could have a feel for how each student was in their own place, and how they felt about going to this college.*

Student 5: *I like that they showed people graduating because it's kind of connects the link like you could go to a community college and then eventually a university... That's exciting and it shows a lot of possibilities and opened up in my mind that if you go to community college you'd have a lot more opportunities by graduating.*

Student 6: *I think it was family oriented too, but also, it talked about finding something that you really love or a job that you might really like so I think the community college is a good place to figure those types of things out or any college really, so I liked that part.*

Once again, students in the second group were also intrigued by the identifiable characters, who were giving true testimonials.

Student 1: *For people like me, who are from smaller islands, more culturally in tuned . . . when he brought up connecting culture with something I love, that appealed to me because I love my culture and I want to keep my culture and teach my children my culture.*

They also shared positive views about the PSA's promotion of culture and diversity.

Student 2: *Having diversity is what Hawaii is all about so I think the fact that they're advertising all these different looking people is good because it shows that oh wow, indeed UH is indeed diverse and does have all these opportunities.*

Student 3: *To go off of that, that's the reason why I chose to come here ... it was the diversity, That was my number one.*

Student 4: *Different perspectives. When you're at places that are 90% one race, you kind of don't get different ideas. But with different cultures, comes different perspectives and lots of new ideas for yourself.*

Student 5: *Being exposed to different cultures is definitely a huge thing that I was very interested in because where I'm from it's very white-washed so we had very little diversity. So coming here it's great to be able to experience different cultures and get to know about different cultures.*

Student 6: *I think the culture thing is extremely important as well. I think when you introduce a lot of cultural ideas, a lot of new passions start up that you might not get from other fields I guess. It really shows how diverse our campus is. We're all different ages, whatever it is ... looks really diverse and that goes with the open-mindedness culture that we have here so I think that's pretty spot on.*

Cognitive Videos

While emotional videos were the obvious winners in both focus groups, reactions to the cognitive videos, on the other hand, were somewhat mixed, and not as resoundingly positive as the emotional category. Only one out of the three cognitively-framed PSAs received mostly favorable reviews, with some suggestions for improvement. The first video, entitled “*Scholarships 2014*,” was characterized by bold text, animated graphics, statistical data, and on-

camera narration by a former UH student and beauty queen offering a significant amount of informational data on the amount of monies raised and number of scholarships offered to recipients of varying degrees at varying campuses. Participants in both focus groups acknowledged that overall, the PSA was generally favorable because it was clear, concise and informative. Many of them admitted being personally concerned about tuition costs and their own student loans and appreciated the UH Foundation's efforts to make scholarships available to students across all 10 campuses of the UH system.

Student 1: "Yeah it was pretty good, I mean after watching it, I think I'm gonna go look for a scholarship right now!"

Although the majority felt the message was cognitively favorable and effective, students also provided richer insight into their emotions about the cognitively-framed video when posed with the question: "How would you improve this message?" Upon further elaboration and dissection of the video, students responded by reacting to several peripheral cues that had little do with the information shared. For instance, although they commented that the female spokesperson was "pretty," they also felt they could not identify with her as a student or someone who needed a scholarship. They noted that her style of dress was not appropriate for the message being shared and thought her role as a former student should be emphasized as more important than her role as a former Miss Hawaii.

Student 1: It would be nice if she was wearing a UH shirt or something and if she was a student. Maybe more casual. It just felt like another administrator talking to us.

Student 2: Yeah I didn't really know that she was Miss Hawaii. I guess it's not very obvious to me, so it does seem like another administrator or something like that. But if it was a student, it would have been like oh wow, if they're getting a scholarship, maybe I should get one too or maybe I should make an effort to apply or find UHF or something like that.

Student 3: *Maybe if she was wearing a UH shirt and then also her sash or something like that, it would have been like ok, wait, she used to go here and is also well-known around the island.*

Moderator: *But would that mean anything to you that she went here or was Miss Hawaii?*

Student 4: *Went here ... probably more so than was Miss Hawaii. I couldn't care less...*

Student 5: *I think that the video would have been more powerful if she said the UH Foundation benefitted her, like the UHF benefitted me with the scholarships available to the other 3000 students out there too. That would have been more like oh I'm a student...she's a student...I can get one too!*

Student 6: *To a degree yes, but she didn't really look like a student. I feel like it would be more appealing if it were someone who was more like a student, or even faculty. It even said she was Miss Hawaii 2002 and studied Communications and French. I mean we're all students. That's the thing we agree with, but we have nothing else in common.*

Based on these comments, participants demonstrated an explicit distaste for narrators or characters that do not relate to them. Although they all agreed the spokesperson was “pretty,” and recognized she was someone within their age group, they felt her manner of delivery was not meant to speak to their generation.

The second cognitively-framed video, entitled “*Lyon Arboretum*,” which focused on the research laboratory dedicated to saving endangered plants, drew mixed emotions and received only partially favorable reviews. While all students in the first group agreed that the message was clear, effective, and professional-looking, others in the second group gave a starkly different review, criticizing the choice of spokesperson and his bland delivery of the message.

Student 1: *The speaker was very uncharismatic. So...UH people are uncharismatic???*

Student 2: *As a student, I would be more responsive to another student speaking, like if there was a student working in the laboratory and they were super passionate about saving certain plants or something like that, I would have been more intrigued by it.*

The third video in the cognitive video category, however was the least favorite of all among both groups—in that it received the most emotional and visceral reaction from students. The “15 to Finish” PSA used upbeat music, professionally-designed animated graphics and bold text to bring home the message that students should consider taking 15 classes a semester in order to graduate in 4 years. Practically every participant was visibly disturbed from the very outset of the PSA. Some contorted their faces into frowns, especially during the graphical representation of the significant number of college dropouts; while others appeared sad, dejected and even angry.

Student 1: In the beginning it kind of seems almost negative like the odds are against you. Like maybe it seems unlikely that you'll graduate almost, like kind of in a downer sort of thing.

Student 2: Maybe that's why they had to make the music so peppy-- to balance the negative message at first.

Student 3: It's really hard to tell people because I know a lot of my friends here are going to school as best they can because they're working to make it through. A lot of students don't want to be a loan student like me, who has to pay back loans. So I think in general it's good to recommend 15 credits a semester, but they should have some sort of way where they could be a little more sympathetic to those who can't, because I think this message is a little bit discouraging to those who have to take it slower.

Student 4: We don't have so much aid from our parents. So us even going to college is a commitment to us and if they're saying oh, 'this many people are not graduating,' it just discourages us and we're like, 'oh maybe we should just be like our parents and not go!'

Student 5: I wanted to tune out a little bit . . . I just didn't want to watch her be so peppy about people who can't even afford to be full-time. I don't know. A different actor would have been cool.

The only respondent who was not fazed by the message was the student from Korea, who said that in his country, 15 credits is not too much to ask at all.

Student 6: *As an international student, for me, it's kind of: 'Oh, JUST 15 credits for graduation?' So it's good for me because -- especially in Korea -- we take more than 15 credits to graduate for the semester.*

Moderator: *How many do you have to take?*

Student 6: *Some of my friends take 22-23 credits for the semester. For the science major, yes that is usual.*

Participants in the second group also acknowledge the veracity of the rational arguments made in the “15 to Finish” PSA, but did not hold back their negative emotional reactions, saying they felt patronized, demeaned, and even annoyed.

Student 1: *It made a lot of sense because of course you want to graduate on time, but for financially-challenged students, you can't really take 15 credits every semester. There's a whole array of issues, that students have like they're single parents, maybe they have a job, other things that take priority over taking 15 credits to graduate on time. I would think it's more for students who have lots of time and more laid back with it. I think this ad would be more for them.*

Student 2: *I KNOW that ... but I don't have the best of finances so you just do what you can do.*

Student 3 *It made me feel patronized. Talked down to.*

Student 4: *I'm shocked by it. It's kind of sad. Yeah 6%! That's really sad.*

Student 5: *It sounds so negative. Almost MEAN! The music is pumping you up, and the graphics are scaring the hell out of you! Pumping you down! But they're pretty clear and informative too and the graphics are modern looking . . . I probably would have focused more on the graphics than the speaker. The speaker is not as necessary for this kind of message, in my opinion. Terrible. Just made me feel terrible.*

Student 6: *It's annoying. She's telling you to do more, but for a lot of students, they're already doing everything they can, so it's kind of annoying to have someone tell you you're not going to graduate on time, even though you're trying as hard as you already can. The delivery was negative, I think for something like that, you're supposed to be motivating students. You shouldn't be so enthusiastic, but more of a serious and prominent tone. Like if Obama told me to take 15 credits per semester, I would do it, but if SHE told me, I'd be like, 'oh yeah! Are YOU even taking 15?'*

Mixed Videos

Videos that exhibited a combination of both emotional and cognitive framing were considered mixed videos, according to the coders. Overall, students did not seem to find this type of message approach favorable. However, the only exception was in relation to the first PSA of this category, entitled “*Teaching Lives*,” which included an authentic testimonial from a real student with an intriguing story line. This supposedly “mixed” PSA actually evoked strong emotional reactions from participants, (as observed by this researcher witnessing students shedding mild tears and breathing empathetic sighs). The PSA featured a heartfelt storytelling narrative from a native Hawaiian student perspective, thanking the UH Foundation for giving him the opportunity to connect with his culture and his family through higher education. The sequence shows the student teaching his grandfather Hawaiian vocabulary and at the end, the grandfather tells his grandson that he is proud of him. (This last line prompted many to wipe tears from their eyes.)

- Student 1: *Looked a lot more emotional.*
- Student 2: *Yeah, definitely more emotional.*
- Student 3: *Very Family oriented.*
- Student 4: *Culturally oriented.*
- Student 5: *Kind of...tears!*
- Student 6: *Yeah me too!*

Respondents were evidently touched by the vicarious storyline of the native Hawaiian student’s connection to his culture and to his family, as well as the university’s uniqueness.

- Student 1: *It made the university unique compared to other universities. They don’t really teach culture that often. Like most in the mainland, it’s just university -- that’s it. But what I like about Hawaii is I can learn about almost all the cultures here.*

Student 2: *I liked that he had the family aspect too. 'Cause even though I'm not personally interested in getting a degree in Hawaiian studies...when he has his grandpa talk about it, it made me immediately think about my dad and grandpa, which is why it brought a little tears, so I think that was effective from a family aspect.*

The second group also received this spot favorably because of the cultural aspect, as well as the genuine tone of the main speaker's storytelling narrative.

Student 1: *Oh, it's so nice! It is favorable for me. As a Pacific islander male . . . we don't really have that intimacy with adult male figures, especially if it's a father figure. But then to see something relatable as a father-grandson-father-son relationship, with the aspect of the culture too, it was really nice. I like that.*

Student 2: *I definitely think it was really good because he takes you on his story so it is intriguing even if I don't relate exactly to his exact situation or what he's studying or his family background, but it's interesting to me because he's telling us a story about him and his experience, so it's favorable for me.*

Student 3: *It's nice how the university benefitted his life and not just his life, but his family in general.*

Student 4: *I found it genuine. I almost cried.*

Student 5: *Yeah me too, especially at the end when he said I'm proud of him, it's like...oh a tear fell out!*

The second mixed video, entitled “*One Day*,” which depicts the UH Manoa campus as an international tourist destination with a female voiceover promoting ideas of inspiration, discovery and innovation, also drew mixed reactions from both groups. Some found it inspirational. Others found it confusing, but overall, the general consensus was that they did not care for the message delivery.

Student 1: *I think it took too long to get to the University. So if you didn't know what it was all about...Yeah, I wouldn't know what it would be about until the end.*

Student 2: *It was just slightly outdated and just a little bit too slow. If they sped it up it would be a little better.*

Student 3: *I think maybe they were trying to capture a different curiosity in people that makes people want to learn, but they didn't show anything of people actually being in school and learning, which made it a little bit confusing.*

Student 4: *I thought it was weird because they went from travelling -- then into an emergency practice room? Yeah, like how does that relate? It was too much of that -- and then all of a sudden...this...? The visuals didn't pair with the message. There's more emphasis on the dude and the dummy than anything else . . . but we're really harsh critics!*

And finally, the third mixed video was a UH West Oahu brand video entitled “*The Three Ps.*” This message was released in 2011 and meant to promote the opening of the new campus at the time. Using animated graphics and a male voiceover announcing the three Ps: *programs, place and plans*, the PSA is clearly a recruitment video with heavy branding elements that predominantly utilizes the color red, its campus logo and name throughout the entire piece. Students were quick to voice their opposition to the red color scheme, as well as the narrator's claim that West O'ahu was in close proximity to many areas on the island. They also did not like how the message seemed to be targeted for an audience younger than their millennial generation.

Student 1: *I know where that campus is and that's too far for me! Even though it's less than a half hour away, it's still too far for me. Yeah!*

Student 2: *Uhh...no...well ok so I liked the commercial a lot, but I wouldn't consider going to West Oahu because it didn't have the program that I was going for.*

Student 3: *Not really for me cuz I'm out of state, so I wouldn't know where that is, I wouldn't know what kind of programs they have, I know they're trying to get me to go there, but I wouldn't really know where it is.*

Student 6: *This one's like more for high-schoolers. It looks like for younger people.*

Students in the second focus group also reacted with ambivalence, responding mostly to simple peripheral cues of colors, backgrounds, student ages and classroom decor:

Student 1: *That looks so old!*

Student 2: *It looks a bit old, but I would also say . . . the students didn't look really excited. They just looked like normal students just sitting in class, not excited to be there in my opinion. It looked a little too fake.*

Student 3: *It definitely seemed slow. Needs to be sped up, more cuts or something. I feel like there was so much red. And I feel like UH is green. Seemed more like a community college style maybe 'cause it was outdated.*

Student 6: *To me, it just reminded me more of high school like it was just a high school commercial so it didn't appeal to me. I mean the white board was creative but that reminds me of high school because when it gets to college, I'm thinking everything is going to be on computer. Because since I started university, I type everything on my computer. Back in Arizona, we had smart boards or here we have video walls and stuff like that. I think of more interactive than just boring old white board notes on the screen so it makes me think that university is gonna be kind of boring with this commercial.*

When asked if anyone remembered the 3 Ps, students in the second group said they were completely bored by the ad, distracted by the map and the message, and could not name what the 3 Ps stood for.

Student 1: *I don't remember what they said about plans. It wasn't impactful.*

After watching all 9 videos in 3 categories, groups were finally asked to recall which one was their overall favorite. The majority chose UH West Oahu's student-produced PSA, "Come Join Us."

Student 1: *I really like the one with the students...if it has students in it, I am definitely more likely to be intrigued by what they're doing, for starters.*

Student 2: *I like more footage that shows students very passionate about their work and having a good time.*

Student 3: *I like seeing the variety of programs because it communicates the amount of options they have at wherever they're showing.*

Student 4: *Yes, the variety of the programs and being happy. Really.*

Based on cumulative comments of both focus groups, the overall consensus seemed to be that UH-brand videos featuring identifiable college millennials who are working hard

while exhibiting genuine attitudes of happiness and fun, is a common formula for successful messaging. Respondents also acknowledged the importance of promoting the university's uniqueness as a culturally diverse research institution and verbalized their willingness to share such videos on social media if there are elements that help boast the university's rankings in certain accomplishments and successes.

Perceptions about UH

Part one of the second research question asks how cognitive and emotional frames play a role in the way college millennials shape their perceptions about UH. Based on their responses after watching videos in three categories, the overall perception seemed to be that UH is “a home away from home” that also happens to be a reputedly ranked research institution with affordable tuition. Emotional videos seemed to draw out the most favorable comments about the university's welcoming and caring nature to connect students with their campus, culture and surrounding community; while cognitive videos evoked perceptions about money and ranking; and mixed videos drew out perceptions about the location's natural beauty.

Emotional Videos

After viewing the emotionally-framed “*Scholarships 2016*” PSA, for example, students said they perceived UH as “definitely a good place to be” as well as being a legitimate ranking research institution with many campus offerings, cultural diversity and affordability.

Student 1: This school is legit. They have doctoral programs. And the students are walking through plants, like they must do research . . . it also attracts donors to want to invest in you.

Student 2: I'm a transfer student from HPU so I moved to UH and honestly like it so much better than HPU because it's got more of a community here, more friendships, everybody becomes your family here, so even if you're homesick and from the mainland, you connect with others who are also facing those same things.

Student 3: *My perception is that I like it . . . I like that it provides that type of information and a level of professionalism.*

Student 4: *I like it. It feels like home away from home.*

Student 5: *I think my impression is really good. When I tell people I go to UHM, they don't think that we just sit on the beach all day and hang out. We do have a nice location and stuff like that but it's also serious -- like I know some of my friends are in different departments where they get to start their research in their undergrad just because of where we are and what we have available to us. So my image of this school is both nice and comforting and a fun time, but also at the same time, you'll get your money's worth if you come here.*

After seeing the emotionally-framed PSA, “Come Join Us,” students acknowledged having positive perceptions of their university, saying this type of video was also worthy of being considered as “shareable” on social media because of its happy tone, its showcase of student successes, and quality programs.

Student 1: *Showing students actually engaging and enjoying themselves. If you kind of put all that together having the relatable-ness of the age group and then you see them enjoying themselves, it helps convey how you're feeling toward the university in a better way.*

Student 6: *I could have bragging rights like: 'oh look guys, I'm over here doing this and my university we're doing these great big things' ... like what makes us unique and what ranks us so well, I would be very likely to share that.*

In relation to the “UHCC Because” PSA, students said they loved the feeling of accomplishment and envisioning their future. Students also said it made them feel a sense of warm welcome, community and family.

Student 3: *I definitely love being here, it's a very inviting school 'cause I came here not knowing anyone at all and yet within the first couple days of being here I had already made friends. And it was a really inviting place to come to especially being so far away from home.*

Student 4: *I definitely love it. Of the schools I applied to, it's probably the best one I could have been accepted to because of location and community.*

Cognitive Videos

Cognitively-framed videos elicited more perceptions about money, prestige and ranking. After watching the second cognitive video entitled, “*Lyon Arboretum*,” for instance, some students shared their perception that UH is constantly asking for money and has a reputation for targeting only big donors.

Student 1: *They’re asking for money ... large donations.*

Student 2: *They were going for people with money. People who want tax write-offs.*

Another student said she was keenly aware of the money ask, but also appreciated the way UH was portrayed as a good place for scientists to address important environmental issues.

Student 3: *I like how they showed all the plants from the environment but they also showed the campus laboratories. Showed that it was clean and well organized and it drew my attention . . . because it looked professional.*

After watching the third cognitive video PSA: “*15 to Finish*” only the international student from Korea commented about his favorable perception about UH:

Student 1: *UH is good for marine biology and biology and film and second language, so...yes it is respected in our country (Korea) it is a good environment -- and not a pressure to students.*

He also said that back home in Korea, UH is considered to be a reputable institution, especially in marine biology, and that degrees from UH are highly valued by his people.

Mixed Videos

After watching the three mixed videos, on the other hand, students shared a generally positive perception that UH is all about location and is widely known as a destination university surrounded by natural beauty. Specifically in response to the PSA: “*One Day*,” students said they were inspired by the images of adventure in a tropical setting that happens to offer opportunities for higher education.

Student 1: *Everything looked really nice, so if you're on the mainland, it looks really pretty, and aesthetically pleasing, like wow, they must have a really nice institution over there.*

Student 2: *You can do really exciting things at UH.*

Desires for UH degree

In response to part two of the second research question, students confirmed it was mainly the emotional videos that spoke to them, which helped shape their desires to persist at the university and to complete their degrees at UH. They attributed their desires to a general sense of camaraderie, community and an overall feeling of gratitude to be in such a warm and welcoming environment.

Student 1: *My experience here has been really good and I love going here. Yay!*

Student 2: *I feel like it's been a positive change from California, a fresh start and I've made a lot of connections with people and hope that keeps going!*

Student 3: *The community is what attracted me to begin with . . . I enjoying being here and am feeling lucky and grateful to be here.*

Behavioral Intentions

To answer part three of the second research question, students reiterated the persuasive effects of the emotional videos above all others, indicating they were more instrumental in helping shape their behavioral intentions to connect with UH after graduation. Some of the reasons they mentioned for intending to stay engaged as alumni included feeling an overall sense of social identity and pride for their institution, maintaining and growing their social capital through university connections and increasing career and lifelong-learning opportunities.

Student 1: *I do take a lot of pride in going here, so I'd definitely like to be a part of that alumni – I don't really know exactly what it is they do, but I know if I saw something like that after I graduated, I'd be like, 'oh yeah I went there and I had a good time and it was really helpful to me, I've gotten so many resources and*

been exposed to so many opportunities here so I would definitely be willing to stay connected with UH even after I graduate.'

Student 2: *I'll always be interested in, always gotta rep the 'Bows!*

Student 3: *I would want to stay connected because maybe I might want to teach here sometime down the road.*

Student 4: *I think regardless if I was successful or not, I would want to stay in touch with the university just because I really like it here and I take a lot of pride in being here and I think even after my time is done, I would still have a large network of people that I could have something in common with that I could reach out to here and they would kind of see me on that common ground.*

However, despite the overall favorable reception of the emotional video frames, some students admitted being on the fence about whether to connect as alumni, saying it would be contingent upon their own post-graduate successes and alumni outreach efforts.

Student 1: *If I'm successful, then yeah.*

Student 2: *I do think UH has helped shape my career because of the support of faculty, but I don't know how involved I would be. It also depends if they reach out to me 'cause I'm not just gonna be like 'Hi, I want to be a speaker at your event!'*

Student 3: *if I'm successful, if I had the time and the money to support the institution ... yeah.*

Discussion

Qualitative results clearly showed that emotional frames were clearly the most effective form of persuasion amongst college millennials in this focus group study. In response to the first research question, students in both groups unanimously found all three videos in the emotional category most favorable. The least favorable were cognitive videos, especially the “15 to Finish PSA”, which astonishingly elicited visceral emotions of anger, distaste and discouragement. Mixed videos drew mixed reactions that included confusion and disinterest on one side of the spectrum, while the “Teaching Lives” PSA, (which portrayed an authentic storytelling narrative

with an identifiable character of millennial age), elicited favorable responses of intrigue, happiness and feelings of validation. In response to the second research questions, all positive perceptions, desires and intentions were also attributed to emotional videos. While the cognitive and mixed videos had some favorable reactions, students felt those approaches were not as effective as emotionally-framed videos. Yet although it was interesting to learn what types of visual frames college millennials actually *liked*, it was even more intriguing to learn what types of video styles and elements they did *not* like.

Common themes that participants raised as unfavorable characteristics of UH-brand PSAs included *talking heads* (which are described by students as “boring” administrators who are “uncharismatic” and not relatable to their generation,) a weak call-to-action, mismatched music in relation to the spoken or unspoken message, shortage of images showing students their age, outdated graphics, spokespersons who are not in touch with their audience, and campus shots that remind them of high school. They expressed distaste and confusion when too many logos and colors of the different UH-related brands were displayed and did not appreciate disjointed messages. Obtaining a collection of such rich, raw data was completely unexpected at the outset of this study, yet fully appreciated and helpful to this researcher’s area of interest.

Theoretical Implications

This qualitative study supports the foundations of both the exemplification and ELM theories, which contend that people make cognitive decisions, based on visual exemplars and are influenced favorably when they are motivated and able to process persuasive messages. However, these current findings also bring credence to the earlier works of Slater & Rounder (2002), who formed the extended ELM theory. In the context of university-brand video PSAs, the EELM allows a richer foundation that helps practitioners understand millennial audiences better while

still responding to their motivations and goals. By connecting emotionally with them through the use of identifiable, authentic characters and compelling storytelling narratives, such an approach allows higher likelihood for millennial viewers to elaborate on both cognitive and emotionally-framed videos more intensely than just being limited to central or peripheral route processing.

It is interesting to note that all the participants in both focus groups reported to be intrinsically-motivated learners and were therefore more inclined and able to centrally process cognitively-framed UH-brand messages. Yet, qualitative results from this study have clearly shown that students overwhelmingly favored the emotional videos over the cognitive and mixed ones, and even made cognitive decisions about their perceptions, desires and behavioral intentions. This is a clear indication that the ELM theory alone is not capable of addressing this phenomenon—and that the EELM must come into play. The three emotional videos entitled: “*Scholarships 2016*,” “*Come Join Us*,” and “*UHCC Because*” were listed as the top 3 favorites based on simple peripheral cues such as the use of upbeat feel-good music, quick-paced sequence of images cut to the rhythm of the beat, colorful visuals of various campus sites and program offerings, student/faculty interaction and smiling faces from genuinely happy students of the millennial generation. Students reported feeling emotionally connected to the exemplars and storyline and that they could identify with the authentic characters of their age group. Through absorption in the narrative, they were able to cognitively process the messages more effectively and confirm their favorable perceptions, desirable attitudes and positive behavioral intentions toward their university. Despite the use of fewer cognitive elements such as text graphics, voiceover narration and minimal use of graphical information, students seemed to takeaway the positive overall sentiment of community, cultural diversity and campus pride. They also mentioned appreciating the importance of experience emotions such as inspiration, hope and

encouragement to succeed. If these were the key takeaway points that message designers wanted viewers to come away with, then, the EELM theory is a useful tool to explain the success of their formula.

Perhaps the most unexpected finding, however, was the students' immensely negative reaction to the cognitively-dominant framed PSA: "*15 to Finish*." While it was earlier expected by this researcher to observe a cognitive reaction to a cognitively-framed video, it was completely astounding to witness how students reacted with emotionally strong feelings in the negative direction of hopelessness, discouragement, and fear of failure. Some of the peripheral cues they mentioned included the style of mismatched music, the annoying personality of the spokesperson, and the professionally impressive graphics, which contrasted with the depressing statistics. Yet despite the unfavorable reaction, students reported successfully receiving the rational arguments of the message. This surprising result further strengthens the tenets of the ELM theory, which holds the notion that peripheral route processing often leads to short term attitude and behavioral changes based on emotional responses. Although the students were upset and temporarily dejected, the highly-motivated college learners were also able to rationalize the arguments and confirmed at the end of each 90-minute session that they all shared positive perceptions about UH and verbalized their desire to complete their degree at UH, as well as their intent to stay connected with UH even after graduation. By experiencing both central and peripheral route processing of cognitively-framed videos, students were able to successfully receive the message delivered and be persuaded in favor of the message sent, despite the glaring lack of message approach and appeal.

It is also interesting to note that the mixed videos, which shared a combination of both emotional and cognitive frames, received the most ambivalent responses. Although the three

videos in that category were not as persuasive or effective as those PSAs with dominant emotional frames, the main finding from that portion of the focus group sessions at least affirmed that even with the lack of a clear dominant cognitive or emotional frame, the power of storytelling and the use of authentic narratives told by genuine people who celebrate community, culture and family values proved to be the winning formula of persuasive messaging. In response to the mixed video, “*Teaching Lives*,” even students who were not of Hawaiian ancestry were able to identify with the character because of the perceived genuine intimacy he shared with his grandfather and children. Through the use of this narrative style, students said they felt engaged with the student’s personal story and were immediately immersed in his familial world, which consequently aroused emotions and recollections of their own personal, past experiences of being validated by an elder family member, thereby affirming the universal appeal and favorability of these types of messages. Once again, EELM provides the structure to explain this astonishing phenomenon.

Finally, this paper contributes to the larger body of public relations research on strategic organizational communication. By using the aforementioned theoretical foundations in the context of branding social videos, organizations will be able to improve, cultivate and nurture relationships with their intended publics.

Practical Implications

The goal of this study is to essentially help organizations, such as universities and alumni associations, to build better communal relationships with college students and potential donors or volunteers. From a practical standpoint, this research provides interesting and unexpected data from a millennial perspective. Such findings may be useful in the efforts of university leaders to achieve desired organizational outcomes of trust, commitment and satisfaction. Furthermore, the

study strengthens earlier works of Hon and Grunig (1999), which highlight the need for organizations to consistently and frequently solicit open and honest feedback from their constituents. By genuinely being concerned about the welfare of students and alumni —without always seeking something in return, public relations experts believe such symmetrical relationships are more likely to produce positive perceptions among their target publics, which is the purest indicator of success (Hon & Grunig, 1999).

Most learned practitioners of strategic organizational communications acknowledge the fundamental basic mandate in persuasive messaging: Know your audience. While the ELM suggests the importance of understanding audience motivations and ability to process messages, the EELM goes even further to seek to understand audience motives and goals and then create narratives that connect with them emotionally. This study also contributes to the wider discussion of university-related messages on social media and offers new qualitative data that suggests practical implications for content designers affiliated with higher education. Findings from this qualitative study not only provide insight into what college millennials *like*, but also what they *do not like* to see in university-branded messages.

This research provides somewhat of a checklist for producers of college recruitment messages. In designing social videos specifically intended to brand UH, for example, producers should follow the number one cardinal rule of getting to know their audience first. Based on comments from this study, college millennial students prefer more direct, concise messages that are straight and to-the-point, with a strong call to action. Based on these focus group's responses, college millennials do not appreciate negative messages, discouraging tones, the fear factor or the surprise element and are annoyed by spokespersons that appear and sound inauthentic or scripted. They do not like clips that are cut too fast or too slow. When edited to music, the

images must match the beat as well as the message. They are confused with too many logos and are more interested in their own respective campuses as opposed to a system-wide promotion. They are unclear of what the UH Foundation does or stands for, where it is located on campus and why its logo is being used for UH System campaigns. They are vaguely aware of what the UH Alumni Association is, and why it exists. Students from UH Mānoa express an undeniable pride and air of superiority for being connected with the flagship campus, while fostering slight campus envy of UH West O‘ahu and a misguided stereotype of community colleges. For instance, after watching the UH West Oahu PSA, the focus group participants (who were all UH Mānoa students) said they enjoyed the message, but did not have any intentions to transfer schools. Instead, they seemed envious of the professionally-produced spot created by students from the UH West Oahu Academy for Creative Media. They questioned why the west-side campus looked better than Mānoa’s campus and why the West ‘Oahu media students were producing commercials for TV instead of them.

On the positive side, they enjoy upbeat music with a local flavor, vibrant colorful shots with students their age enjoying work and play on campus, and modern-looking graphics and images that move to the beat of the music bed. College millennials want to see people that look like them, hear voices that sound like them, and watch videos that are produced by students like them. They are very interested in specific program offerings that show a variety of opportunities for students to get engaged. They are environmentally conscious and community-driven. They seek validation and encouragement from authorities and elders, and sympathy from those who do not understand their financial constraints. They have a strong sense of pride in their alma mater and are willing to share videos that highlight the uniqueness, cultural diversity, study abroad programs, prestige and ranking of UH. They continually seek better opportunities for their future

in work, social and family life. They value friendships and relationships with their professors. And all participants confirmed their desires to not only graduate with a UH degree, but also to connect with the university and their campus as alumni after graduation. While many expressed concerns about money, they also agreed in the great value of UH and mentioned their appreciation for the sense of family, cultural diversity, community-building efforts and the overall supportive environment created by students, faculty and staff. Knowing this insightful data will be highly useful in crafting successful social media campaigns in the future.

Limitations

It is important to note that the goal of this qualitative research was not meant to produce generalizations. Rather, it was meant to explore the phenomenon of college millennials processing a specific set of university brand videos in real time. While this study provided rich and useful data into what students were thinking and feeling, how they reacted in a social setting, and why, there were some limitations. Focus groups were limited mainly to UH Mānoa Communication students and consisted mostly of junior or senior-level undergraduates. College freshman and sophomores were not included in this study, but would have been a helpful demographic to understand. Also, because of the homogenous nature of participants, there was no group to represent students of low motivations for higher learning.

Future Studies

Future research should include a more diverse recruitment pool, such as younger participants, including high school students who may or may not be considering college admissions. This would affect the sampling and perhaps provide subjects who would possibly fit into the low motivation category. To deeper explore the validity of the aforementioned theories, it might be interesting to see how further studies may elaborate more on the ELM and EELM

models to perhaps explain how peripheral cues may actually lead to more enhanced central processing of persuasive messages, more positive perceptions and longer-lasting attitude changes. Another option to advance this research is to design new videos using findings from this qualitative study and applying the concepts of the exemplification and ELM/EELM theories through cognitive and emotional frames and compelling, authentic storytelling narratives. Once an updated series of videos is distributed online, future research could employ another focus group study to see if the suggestions made a difference in reactions, as well as a separate quantitative study to measure whether the new videos played a role in increasing student enrollment, recruitment, retention and graduation rates. Other studies could also look at possible growth in alumni engagement, giving or volunteerism and perhaps even monitor the sharing of such videos online.

Conclusion

Perception is everything. As many universities continue to struggle with enrollment management and downward trends in alumni membership, it is important for strategic organizational communications professionals of higher education institutions to continually seek ways that build strong communal relationships with their current and prospective students and alumni. It is highly advised that they stay current with social media offerings and visual communications, especially to younger audiences, in order to build, maintain, and strengthen branding reputation. Based on the findings of this qualitative focus group study, it is suggested that media designers consider monitoring public perceptions by conducting focus groups on a periodic basis to experience the value of face-to-face, two-way symmetric communication with their target audiences. They should also consider further applying the exemplification, ELM and EELM theories into practice through the conscious employment of emotional framing in social

videos, using visual exemplars—and when appropriate, creating authentic storytelling narratives featuring identifiable characters. This study provides a framework for creating *shareable* videos that use any or a combination of the following stylistic elements such as interesting and authentic (unscripted) first-person storytelling narratives, vibrant visuals of real-life students engaged in real activities, synchronized images cut to the beat of feel-good music; animated graphics and text, conscious use of branding logos specific to each campus; and storylines that promote a culturally diverse, community-building environment that embraces family values and affordability.

Finally, in the context of building better organizational relationships with desired publics, university officials should consider giving millennials a bigger voice in UH-brand campaigns, especially in social videos pertaining to student recruitment and retention. It is strongly recommended that students in the field of communications or creative media be tapped as potential producers of future videos on social media so that indeed college millennials may have a louder and more *visual* voice in advocating for their own future as well as for their university. By constantly striving to reach the desirable target audience of college millennials the way they want to be reached, universities will be able to build a better sense of brand loyalty, commitment and trust among its youngest constituents. If public relations practitioners remember the following three main takeaway points: 1) aim for the heart; 2) empower young voices; and 3) visualize a hopeful future, then perhaps more universities will experience a vibrant branding reputation and a quantitative increase in student recruitment, retention and graduation rates, which will essentially translate into growing alumni memberships and annual giving.

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Appendix A.1: UH Brand PSA List

UH Brand PSA List

1. University of Hawaii Foundation - Public Service Announcement 01 10/29/12
<https://youtu.be/BjWazOv7zOY>
2. University of Hawaii Alumni Association - We Are 11/19/12
<https://youtu.be/GgDzcumEVrg>
3. UHF Public Service Announcement 2 9/27/13
<https://youtu.be/lvTNqA5Q5Io>
4. UHAA - Happy Holidays 2013 12/19/13
<https://youtu.be/fFig58mVatw>
5. University of Hawai'i Foundation - Scholarship PSA 1/29/14
<https://youtu.be/aezuYCcXooo>
6. Scholarship recipient - Roelle Torres 3/31/14
<https://youtu.be/oqnQJlXgiug>
7. 30 Seconds - Brian Bowen/Seaver Institute 5/22/14
<https://youtu.be/MiaMZctq7P8>
8. 30 Seconds - University of Hawai'i Lyon Arboretum 5/22/14
<https://youtu.be/JaDzCn4VGQ4>
9. 30 Seconds - Alissa Kapuaonaona Huddy 6/13/14
<https://youtu.be/LNsw-DV9-Rs>
10. 30 Seconds - Simons Foundation 8/19/14
<https://youtu.be/GYGKV0ar8CY>
11. 30 Seconds - Thomas Kim 8/20/14
<https://youtu.be/Q6j3qVyoOns>
12. 30 Seconds - Yolanda Domingo 8/20/14
https://youtu.be/fam93j8FC_4
13. 30 Seconds - Kaipo Perez, III 8/2/14
<https://youtu.be/5AyAeoDCy9c>
14. 30 Seconds - Teaching Lives 9/24/14
<https://youtu.be/wEClUTAi-No>
15. 30 Seconds - Malia Andrade Stout 10/21/14
<https://youtu.be/l-bsLqOFGSI>
16. UHAA - We Are 2015 11/10/15
<https://youtu.be/ymAkiPu7qUQ>
17. 30 Seconds - UHCC feat. Gwen Ho 11/10/15
<https://youtu.be/1O-S9GYVjew>

Appendix A.2: UH Brand PSA List

18. Fun Factory - Catherine Gardiner 11/10/15
<https://youtu.be/feXgbGRvOpw>
19. Happy Holidays from UH Foundation 12/31/15
https://youtu.be/Or_XWUFw8qw
20. 30 seconds - Scholarships [June 2016] 6/6/16
<https://youtu.be/Aa2FuFD6YrY>
21. 30 seconds - Walter Dods 6/6/16
<https://youtu.be/yriT-mxgEYw>
22. UH Foundation - Thanks a Billion! Ad Spot 01 11/2/16
<https://youtu.be/lhMVTosQsow>
23. UH Foundation - Thanks a Billion! Ad Spot 02 11/2/16
<https://youtu.be/WWzphNJU-zA>
24. The University of Hawaii at Manoa : "One Day" 4/8/10
<https://youtu.be/AGC3xiBQNpY?list=PL44B04C612F65A0A3>
25. The University of Hawaii at Manoa : "Innovate" 4/8/10
<https://youtu.be/-d8kINCyDxs?list=PL44B04C612F65A0A3>
26. The University of Hawaii at Manoa : "Exploration" 4/8/10
<https://youtu.be/Kudh6alxnis?list=PL44B04C612F65A0A3>
27. The University of Hawaii at Manoa : "Experience the World" 4/8/10
<https://youtu.be/3O-VGhvXr8Q?list=PL44B04C612F65A0A3>
28. The University of Hawaii at Manoa : "Lifestyle" - 30-second version 1/31/12
<https://youtu.be/E3taYv84cQY>
29. 15 to Finish PSA for University of Hawaii 5/23/12
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hIm0fqS-OEg>
30. The University of Hawaii at Manoa : "Life and Times" 4/26/13
<https://youtu.be/K-Rq5MIoc3I>
31. The University of Hawaii at Manoa : "Connected" 8/28/14
<https://youtu.be/djo5DhxOCaw>
32. #MakeManoaYours | Social Media Campaign 1/11/16
<https://youtu.be/jQ1USQqPHfY>
33. University of Hawai'i at Mānoa : "YourPOV" 5/5/16
<https://youtu.be/g8jpA-n1Tcs>
34. The University of Hawai'i at Mānoa radio spot 4/1/17
<https://youtu.be/68DJbIOAs6U>
35. UH West O'ahu 4-Year Degree Commercial 9/8/09
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sRK3AN0-STc>

Appendix A.3: UH Brand PSA List

36. UH West O'ahu "Dreams" Commercial 6/8/10 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eJNb9AlxSxw>
37. UH West O'ahu "The Three P's" Commercial 10/3/11
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oNnmqiVF1kQ>
38. UH West O'ahu Commercial - "A Sense Of Place" 4/11/12
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OP7_XWJz0KA
39. Taste of UH West O'ahu: Grand Opening 8/13/12
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OlZ86hDZkeM>
40. The New UH West O'ahu Campus is OPEN!! 10/24/12
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oNDB-cbw37U>
41. 55 by 25: UH West O'ahu – Shirell 2/5/16 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tVmyCijUkqU>
42. 55 by 25: UH West O'ahu – Richard 2/5/16 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9xl5HjM95MI>
43. UH West O'ahu students get real world experience through internships 3/14/16
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hFRhnSJml4o>
44. Come Join Us 3/24/17
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mFexw5ltQ3g>
45. University of Hawai'i Hilo (30 sec) - Join us and find what inspires you. 4/6/17
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tlyb_HBXWtk
46. University of Hawaii Community Colleges 9/12/12
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q4FhTrhpHhU>
47. University of Hawaii Community Colleges Define Your World A 9/12/12
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PXHDFD9j4zc>
48. University of Hawaii Community Colleges Define Your World B 9/12/12
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FTqTW2GhEZg>
49. It's Never too late 5/21/13 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OFXlqVo7_zY
50. Non Traditional Careers for Men 5/21/13 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z3cx7X4ZQm0>
51. Non Traditional Careers for Women 5/21/13 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J9JlthM5RDE>
52. UHCC 'Go forward' 7/24/13 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WFXIbWMSKW0>
53. UHCC Because 5/14/15 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1P2YqFvOJFs>
54. UHCC Art meets Technology 5/14/15 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E_ebNfYp0RI




Appendix B: Descriptions of Cognitive Videos

Cognitive frames

<p>1. <u>Scholarship PSA 2014</u></p> 	<p>Generic informational message on scholarship offerings available to students of all UH campuses. Female spokesperson is former student and beauty queen. Spot shows B-roll footage of Manoa campus and infographs of money disbursed. UH Foundation Website address is mentioned for more information.</p>
<p>2. <u>University of Hawai'i Lyon Arboretum</u></p> 	<p>Informational message about Lyon Arboretum and its work to preserve native plants and species. Spokesperson is a director of the program who describes the impact of his research on Hawaii and the world. Female voiceover promotes UH Foundation website.</p>
<p>3. <u>15 to Finish</u></p> 	<p>Rational argument using statistics and graphics to persuade students to take 15 credits every semester in order to graduate on time. A female spokesperson shows shocking trend of student dropout rates over upbeat, disco-type music.</p>

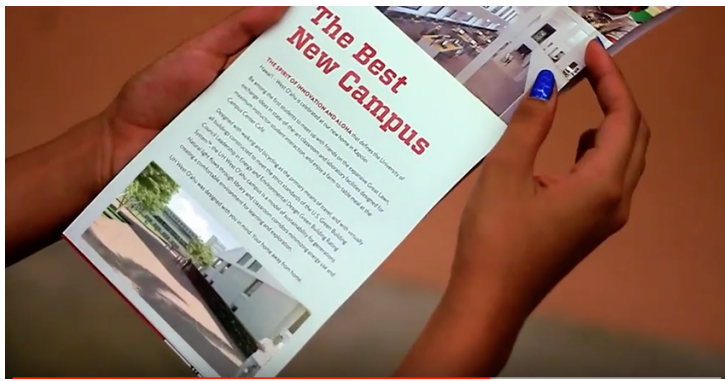
Appendix C: Descriptions of Emotional Videos

Emotional frames

<p>1. <u>Scholarships 2016</u></p>  <p>30 seconds - Scholarships [June 2016]</p> <p>UH Foundation</p> <p>Subscribe 67</p> <p>202 views</p>	<p>Colorful visuals of outdoor species and cultural environments are featured in this media rich ad, displaying various programs and diverse scholarship recipients shown as a montage of smiling, happy faces.</p>
<p>2. <u>Come Join Us</u></p>  <p>Produced by UHWO Academy for Creative Media students</p>	<p>Young happy college students enjoying campus life and programs from students' perspectives. Family-friendly feel. Colorful vivid imagery. Produced by current students for student recruitment.</p>
<p>3. <u>UHCC Because</u></p>  <p>UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII COMMUNITY COLLEGES</p>	<p>Visual, inspiring, feel-good images of families, first-generation college graduates and culturally conscious students achieving their dreams and goals through higher education.</p>

Appendix D: Descriptions of Mixed Videos

Combination of Cognitive and Emotional frames

<p><u>Teaching Lives</u></p> 	<p>Hawaiian male tells personal story of how scholarships helped him go back to his cultural roots and pass on his knowledge to his 'ohana. Hawaiian language, natural sound and branding graphics are used to complement the emotional tear-jerking narrative.</p>
<p>2. <u>UH Manoa : "One Day"</u></p> 	<p>Colorful vivid imagery of various locations on campus over inspirational rhythmic music. Female voiceover promoting ideas of inspiration, discovery and innovation.</p>
<p>3. <u>UH West O'ahu "The Three P's"</u></p> 	<p>Branding campaign for the UHWO campus that uses a male voiceover, animation and graphic text to promote the idea of the 3 Ps: programs, place and plan.</p>

Appendix E: Informed Consent Form



Consent to Participate in a Research Project

Bernadette Baraquio, Student Investigator

Project title: Cognitive and Emotional Frames of Social Videos:
College Student Perceptions about UH

Aloha! My name is **Bernadette Baraquio**. I am a candidate for a Master's Degree in Communications at the University of Hawaii (UH). As part of my thesis, I am conducting a research project. The purpose of this study is to assess how media framing plays a role in college students' perceptions about their university. I am asking you to participate in this project because you are at least 18 years old and you are enrolled as a UH student.

Activities and Time Commitment: If you participate in this project, you will be asked to fill out a short pre-questionnaire about your natural motivations for learning. Based on your responses, you will be asked to join about eight other people in a focus group to talk about your perceptions of UH-brand video public service announcements (PSAs). The discussion will be guided by open-ended questions that will last about an hour to 90 minutes. Focus group questions will include questions like, "What is your overall perception of this video and why?" "What stood out for you the most?" With your permission, I will audio-record the interview so that I can later transcribe the interview and analyze the responses.

Benefits and Risks: Your input is valuable. The findings from this project may help UH improve its promotional videos in the future. I believe there is little risk to you in participating in this research project. You may become uncomfortable answering any of the questions or discussing topics during the focus group. If you do become stressed or uncomfortable, you can skip the question or take a break. You can also stop participating at any time.

Privacy and Confidentiality: I will keep all study data confidential and secure in a password-protected computer. Only my University of Hawaii advisor and I will have access to the information. Other agencies that have legal permission have the right to review research records. The University of Hawaii Human Studies Program has the right to review research records for this study.

After I transcribe the interviews, I will erase or destroy the audio-recordings. When I report the results of my research project, I will not use your name. I will not use any other personal identifying information that can identify you. I will use pseudonyms (fake names) and report my findings in a way that protects your privacy and confidentiality to the extent allowed by law.

Although we ask everyone in the group to respect everyone's privacy and confidentiality, and not to identify anyone in the group or repeat what is said during the group discussion, please remember that other participants in the group may accidentally disclose what was said. Avoid sharing personal information that you may not wish to be known.

Voluntary Participation: Your participation in this project is completely voluntary. You may stop participating at any time. If you stop being in the study, there will be no penalty or loss to you.



Consent to Participate in a Research Project

Bernadette Baraquio, Student Investigator

Project title: **Cognitive and Emotional Frames of Social Videos:
College Student Perceptions about UH**

Questions: If you have any questions about this study, please call or email me at 808-351-0528 & bb88@hawaii.edu. You may also contact my advisor, Professor Ji Young Kim, at jkim22@hawaii.edu. You may contact the UH Human Studies Program at 808.956.5007 or uhirb@hawaii.edu to discuss problems, concerns and questions; obtain information; or offer input with an informed individual who is unaffiliated with the specific research protocol. Please visit <https://www.hawaii.edu/researchcompliance/information-research-participants> for more information on your rights as a research participant.

If you agree to participate in this project, please sign and date this signature page and return it to:

Keep this copy of the informed consent for your records and reference.

Signature(s) for Consent:

I give permission to join the research project entitled, *Cognitive and Emotional Frames of Social Videos: College Student Perceptions about UH*

Please initial next to either "Yes" or "No" to the following:

___ Yes ___ No I consent to be audio-recorded for the interview portion of this research.

Name of Participant (Print): _____

Participant's Signature: _____

Signature of the Person Obtaining Consent: _____

Date: _____

Mahalo!

Appendix F: Pre-Interview Questionnaire and Focus Group Pre-structured Questions



Bernadette Baraquio, Student Investigator
 Project title: **Cognitive and Emotional Frames of Social Videos:
 College Student Perceptions about UH**

Focus Group Pre-Questionnaire

Thank you for agreeing to participate in our research study entitled: "*Cognitive and Emotional Frames of Social Videos: College Student Perceptions about UH.*" In order to place you in the appropriate Focus Group, please respond to the following 14 statements by filling in the blanks with the appropriate corresponding numbers below.

1: strongly disagree 2: disagree 3: neutral 4: agree 5: strongly agree

- 1) I study because studying is important to me _____
- 2) I want to study and learn new subjects _____
- 3) I study because studying gives me pleasure and joy _____
- 4) I keep trying to solve a task, even when it is difficult for me _____
- 5) I do my academic work because I think it important _____
- 6) I study because I like to acquire new knowledge _____
- 7) I like to study difficult subjects _____
- 8) I try to know more about the subjects I like, even without my teachers asking _____
- 9) I like going to college because I learn interesting subjects there _____
- 10) I get interested when my teachers start new content _____
- 11) I study because I want to learn more and more _____
- 12) I study even without anyone requesting _____
- 13) I like to study challenging subjects _____
- 14) I put a lot of effort into college work, even when it will not count _____

Focus Group Interview Questions

After watching each PSA:

- 1) What is your overall perception about this video and why?
- 2) What elements of this video stood out for you the most and why?
- 3) How likely are you to share this type of video on social media? (Why or why not?)

After watching all the videos:

- 1) What messaging styles were most appealing to you and why?
- 2) What are your perceptions about UH as a trusted institution for higher education?
- 3) What is your level of commitment to completing your degree at UH?
- 4) What is your level of desire to remain connected with UH after graduation?

Appendix G: FOCUS GROUP AGENDA

Cognitive and Emotional Appeals of Social Videos: *College Student Perceptions about their University*

Group of 6, each with a facilitator and observer/note-taker

Time	Item	Talking Points – Facilitator
5 min	Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hello, my name is Sherrie White, Media Lab Director and moderator for today's discussion. This focus group is being conducted to develop a better understanding of the way college students perceive UH video PSAs. Thanks for your candid input today—all comments will be anonymous.
25 min	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PLAY 3 COGNITIVE VIDEOS (ONE AT A TIME, with 3 questions following each video) 	4) What is your overall perception about this video? 5) What elements of this video stood out for you the most? 6) How likely are you to share this type of video on social media? (Why or why not?)
25 min	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PLAY 3 EMOTIONAL VIDEOS (ONE AT A TIME, with 3 questions following each video) 	1) What is your overall perception about this video? 2) What elements of this video stood out for you the most? 3) How likely are you to share this type of video on social media? (Why or why not?)
25 min	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PLAY 3 MIXED VIDEOS (ONE AT A TIME, with 3 questions following each video) 	1) What is your overall perception about this video? 2) What elements of this video stood out for you the most? 3) How likely are you to share this type of video on social media? (Why or why not?)
10 min	MAIN DISCUSSION Q&A	After viewing all these videos, 1) What are your perceptions about UH as a trusted institution for higher education? 2) What is your level of commitment to completing your degree at UH? 3) What is your level of desire to remain connected with UH after graduation?
5 min	Conclusion and Questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thanks for participating! Help yourself to food and refreshments!